

Roger Robinson
Local 876 President
876 Horace Brown Dr.
Madison Heights, MI 48071



Marv Russow
Local 951 President
3270 Evergreen Dr. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

**Testimony of Chris Michalakakis on HB 4923
Legislative Director of Untied Food and Commercial Workers Locals 951 and 876**

**Before the Committee on Families and Children's Services
Wednesday, October 24th, 2007**

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) represents over 50,000 workers across the state of Michigan. Our members work in grocery stores, retail stores, food processing plants, drug stores, as well as manufacturing plants. **UFCW supports House Bill 4923**, as we believe that the proposal benefits food stamp recipients, retail food workers, as well as grocers.

When we negotiate contracts, one of the demands often made by our members is frequent pay periods. The more frequent the pay periods are, the easier it is for a worker to budget themselves. We believe that this principal holds true in relation to food stamp distribution- that the more distribution periods a recipient has, the easier it is for that recipient to budget themselves.

While critics of this bill might argue that some people collect too little in food stamps to divide their monthly amount, UFCW would be open to the possibility of setting a threshold requirement for two distributions a month.

Currently, the monthly food stamp program creates a problem in many stores in Michigan. Grocers find that their stores are very busy the first 10 days of the month, then slow the remaining 20 days. In some stores, this means that they cannot carry any fresh produce or fresh cut meat for those 20 days, which not only hurts sales, but impacts the community as a whole, as these healthier foods are no longer available, and residents must purchase less healthy, processed foods.

This lack of business creates a strain on retail food workers, as many find themselves being pushed to work extra hard the first 10 days of the month, then see their hours get cut for the rest of the month. We believe that by having a more equal distribution of food stamps throughout the month, workers will see a more even distribution of hours, as well as a greater availability of hours. In these hard economic times, Michigan needs all of the jobs, state income tax revenue, and sales tax revenue it get!

While no other state in the U.S. has attempted this, UFCW believes that Michigan has a unique opportunity to become a leader in new and innovative ways to distribute food stamps in a manner that is most beneficial to the economy. If passed into law, HB 4923 would benefit food assistance recipients, retail food workers, and grocers; by creating jobs, making healthier food more available, and by raising tax revenue for the State of Michigan.